State CIO
Agency IT Plans
2007 – 2009 Biennium

State Board of Elections

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Departmental/Agency IT Plans
2007-2009 Biennium

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Chapter 1 - Departmental/Agency Strategic Business Initiatives and Major Business Requirements

Agency Background

The State Board of Elections (SBE) is the state agency charged with overall responsibility for administration of the elections process and campaign finance disclosure in North Carolina. The agency's duties are to promote consistent administration and equal application of all elections and campaign finance laws, rules, and regulations. SBE strives to promote among the citizens of North Carolina confidence in the integrity of the free election process through the consistent administration and equal application of all election and campaign finance laws, rules, and regulations. SBE is supported by a 20-member professional staff overseeing day-to-day operations of the State Board office in Raleigh (administration and campaign reporting).

Agency Functions

Overall, the State Board of Elections is responsible for administering the elections process and campaign finance disclosure in the State. The agency serves the public by supervising all primary and general elections held in the State. To this end, the State Board of Elections enforces election laws and promulgates reasonable rules and regulations governing the conduct of primaries and elections in the State. The office is comprised of three functional units:

Voter Administration

Including general supervision of 100 county boards of elections in administering elections and related laws, certifying election results, voter outreach, voter registration, absentee voting, education/training, investigations/audits, and legal matters

Election Administration

Including general supervision of 100 county boards of elections in administering elections and related laws, certifying election equipment, implementing voting policies and procedures, and guidance of election day workers.

Campaign Reporting

Including public education; assistance to candidates, political committee treasurers and county/municipal boards of elections and staff; investigating complaints, conducting research and preparing analyses in preparation for the State to hold evidentiary hearings, providing for electronic filing, and conducting training

Information Systems

Including implementing and maintaining a state election information management system (SEIMS), providing assistance to counties, campaign committees, and statewide election data to the public

Goals and Objectives

- Move towards more consistent operations and procedures in the county board of elections offices.
- Improve the efficiency of operations in the county and state offices.
- Provide better access to data to the public

Governmental Mandates

Implement new state and federal mandates and legislation. New legislation is passed every session by the state legislature addressing both the Elections and Campaign finance areas. Processes and procedures must be put in place to facilitate the implementation of these changes.

Improve the monitoring and reporting of data to insure compliance with Federal Help America Vote Act and National Voter Registration Act.

Chapter 2 - Requirements for Transitioning Existing IT Activities/Resources

Current projects

There are two active current projects. The Voting Equipment upgrade HAVA project which is required by Federal and State Legislation is in the implementation phase. This project will be completed with the 2006 general election in November. The other project is the Online Training project which is required by State Legislation. This project is in the early plan initiation phase.

Applications

Campaign Finance

Campaign Finance Org/ Central

The CFO application is an administrative tool used by the North Carolina State Board of Elections to define committee structures, describe their purpose, record their receipts and expenditures, create required reports. CFRE (Campaign Finance Report Entry) application supports data entry and auditing of the reports for campaign finance. CFDRV (Campaign Finance Document Receipt Verification) application supports document imaging of reports and other documents submitted to the State.

Campaign Finance Remote

The application is a tool for defining committee structures, describing their purpose, recording their receipts and expenditures, creating required reports, and submitting this information to the State Board of Elections.

Candidate Filing

The Candidate Filing Application is a tool for managing a database of candidate filing information taken from standard applications submitted by candidates to the State and County Board of Elections. This information is used to generate several types of application forms and summary reports to the state.

SEIMS

The State Election Information Management System (SEIMS) is a suite of applications that automates voter registration and greatly simplifies the administration of voter records. SEIMS consists of two major parts. One is the set of functions used for local processing in the counties. These functions include registering voters, verifying addresses, recording voter's history, mailing

absentee ballots, administering polling-places and others. The second is support for statewide functions, which are based on a central statewide database containing the voter registration and voter history data from all the counties in the state.

SEIMS (Original)

The base SEIMS application functions support the entry and management of voter registration and jurisdiction information. The legacy applications use a 2-tier architecture and are coded in Visual Basic.

SEIMS+

SEIMS+ applications are functions that required major changes for the HAVA project and were redone as VB.net applications These functions are Ballot Style, Provisional voting support and Petition support.

Election Reporting System

Election reporting ids a function in the original SEIMS that supports consolidated state wide reporting of preliminary election results on election night and the official results at canvass.

Infrastructure assets

SEIMS runs on servers in each of the 100 counties. The servers are provided and supported by the State Board of Elections IT Staff. There are also several servers at the SBE site to support the state data base, development and testing. All of the application software is developed and supported by the SBE staff.

Application Software Upgrades

The SBE application code is written in Visual Basic. Many of the application are written in VB 6.0. VB.net is the latest technology supported by Microsoft. It is not cost effective to redo all applications in VB.Net. Several of the SEIMS functions have been written in or converted to .net. As new modules are developed or as significant changes are made to existing code the components are being migrated to VB.Net

Hardware and System Software Updates

The SEIMS hardware servers, server operating system and database server were all upgraded in 2003 and 2004.

SQL Server 2000 is the current database server level supported by the SBE. The server operating system is Windows 2003.

Centralization

SEIMS is a client/server application that replicates data to the statewide voter registration database real time. Each of the 100 counties has a server and all software installed locally. This has many advantages however, the SBE experience in upgrading and supporting SEIMS over the past several years

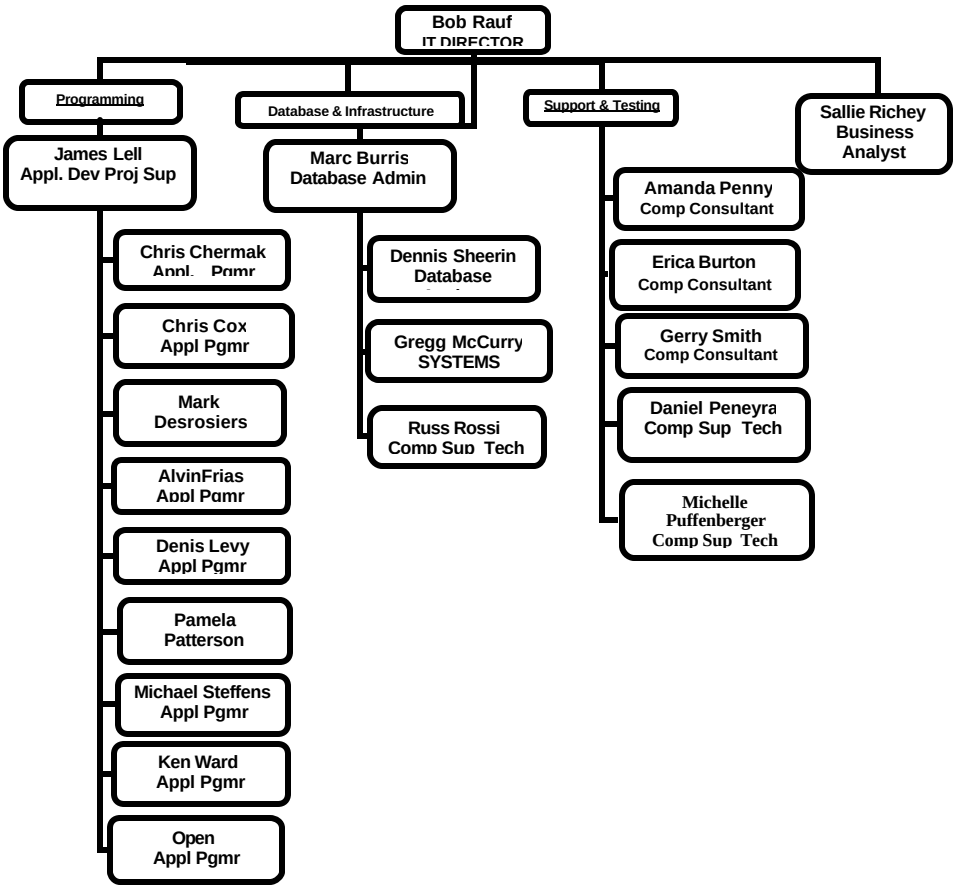
confirms that this approach should be migrated towards more centralized support and migrate from a decentralized to a more centralized approach over time..

Operations/IT management

The SBE is a very small agency. For the most part planning and coordination can be handled very simply because of the small size. Complexity is added because of the support provided to the county boards of elections. The county boards are county personnel. IT support is provided mainly be the county, however the state must support the county voter registration and elections systems and software. Without major changes in the split reporting structure between the state and county any consolidation becomes very difficult.

Human resources

The IT staffing resource requirements are covered by the current staffing. The majority of the current staff is new to the agency and is gaining on the job experience with the business, infrastructure and applications. The current organization and staffing is shown below:



Chapter 3 - IT Specific Economic-Driven Requirements or Opportunities

Application Technology

The SBE application code is written in Visual Basic. Many of the application are written in VB 6.0. VB.net is the latest technology supported by Microsoft. It is not cost effective to redo all applications in VB.Net. As new modules are developed or as significant changes are made to existing code the components are being migrated to VB.Net. The current SEIMS functions categorized as SEIMS+ are coded in VB.Net (Provisional Voting Support, Ballot Style Support and Petition Support). The next set of functions with significant change that will be redone in .Net will be Poll Worker/Election Worker Support, Geocode Support and Absentee Voting Support.

Upgrade Infrastructure - Hardware and System Software Updates

The SEIMS hardware servers, server operating system and database server were all upgraded in 2003 and 2004. To maintain support and reliability of the system these should be upgraded in 2007 and 2008. This initiative is in early stages of discussions. The upgrades should be containable with the continuation budget and federal grant funds.

Centralize Additional Function

These projects are all in the very early stages of discussions. Currently most functions and report generation executes at the county site. Many of the reporting capabilities can be provided centrally via the Web. Consideration is being given to converting several of the current reports to centralized web reports that can be accessed via the Web. This should reduce the support cost by allowing the SBE to update 1 copy of these reports rather than 100 as changes are required.

Chapter 4 - IT Initiatives Developed From and Aligning With Plan Drivers

Goals and Objectives

- Move towards more consistent operations and procedures in the county board of elections offices.
- Improve the efficiency of operations in the county and state offices.
- Provide better access to data to the public

Governmental Mandates

Implement new state and federal mandates and legislation. New legislation is passed every session by the state legislature addressing both the Elections and Campaign finance areas. Processes and procedures must be put in place to facilitate the implementation of these changes.

Improve the monitoring and reporting of data to insure compliance with Federal Help America Vote Act and National Voter Registration Act.

Initiative 1 – On-line Training/E-Learning

This initiative is being implemented to address State Campaign Finance legislation as well as improve the consistency of processes in the counties. This project is in the plan initiation stage. The goals of this initiative are to:

- Meet the requirements for Campaign Finance Treasure training in House Bill 1846.
- Provide a cost effective online training environment that election participants can access over the internet.
- Provide a training management environment that will allow SBOE to effectively manage all training material and related information.
- Obtain the means to produce professional interactive and effective training material for use in instructor led, online, and offline (DVD) delivery methods.
- Provide a means for seminars and classroom training sessions to be broadcast over the internet.

The current continuation budget will cover the initial implementation.

Initiative 2 - Campaign Finance - New Legislation and Automated Audits

This past session several bills were passed that will require changes in the Campaign Finance Software. These changes are required by bills H1845, H 1846, H 128, H1024, H 1843, S 1523, H 966 and H 1847. The legislation is currently being reviewed and the project is not to the point of plan initiation.

Initiative 3 - E POLL BOOK

Implement an electronic version of the voter registration poll book that will allow voters to be checked in more efficiently and accurately than under the current paper based system. An Electronic Poll Book System is a computer-based system that permits Election Officials to process voters at the polling place. The system will assist the election worker in capturing the voter information, identifying the voter eligibility, recording the voter's voting method, and producing the forms required for a voter to cast their vote legally The electronic poll book will contain data on all voters within the entire jurisdiction, and eliminate the need for and expenses associated with the printed voter registration book. The poll book will also electronically store voter history and updated voter personal information that can be uploaded to the voter registration system immediately, eliminating the cost and long hours required to manually input voter history information. Work on the project is targeted to start in early 2007 and the project is not to the point of plan initiation.

Initiative 4 – Automated Agency Interfaces

Many agencies provide the ability to register to vote as a service. Most of the agencies process these registrations as hard copy forms and mail them to the county board of elections offices. The largest volume of registrations comes from the DMV offices. This transmittal of voter registration data was automated several years ago and is being enhanced this year. This has been very effective in reducing data entry time and errors. The ESC has the second highest volume of voter registrations. Work will begin in 2006 and continue in 2007 to evaluate implementing an automatic transmittal of data from ESC to the State Board of Elections.